

Shaykh-ul-Islam Ibn Taymeyyah's Letter to the People of Bahrain

The following is some extracts of Shaykh-ul-Islam's letter to the people of Bahrain.

That which obliges (my writing of) this (letter) is what your delegation has narrated to me about affairs of division and differing amongst you, to the point that fighting has almost broken out. They mentioned that the reason for this differing is the issue of the disbelievers seeing their Lord (on the Day of Judgement), and I never expected this issue to go as far as it has, as this affair is a light one (khafeef).

Rather it is important (to mention) that it is obligatory on every Muslim to believe firmly that the believers will see their Lord in the Next Abode when gathered upon the plains of the day of Judgement, and also when they enter Paradise. This is due to what has been reported by a conclusively large number of narrations from the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) found with the scholars of Hadeeth. For verily he (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) reported that we are going to see our Lord just as we see the full moon or the sun on a clear day, we are not going to have any difficulty in seeing Him.

And the sight of Him, may He be exalted, is the highest level of delight in Paradise and the very goal of all those who worship Allaah, being sincere to Him in the Religion, even if they will be on different levels in how they see Him based on their closeness to Allaah and their knowledge of Him.

As for the issue of the disbelievers seeing Him, then this discussion only surfaced and became a focus of debate, based on what has reached me, three hundred years after Hijrah. A group of scholars refrained from speaking about this issue, while others spoke about it. Those who spoke about it differed over it, having three different positions, and I do not know that those who differed over it ever cursed each other or boycotted each other over it, since each of the three groups were people of virtues and people of Sunnah.

This discussion is similar to the discussion surrounding the issue of the disbelievers being held accountable (for their deeds): Will they have to account for their deeds or not? It is an issue that no one is to be cast outside of Islaam based on it, and there exists consensus on this. And it is also correct (to say) that pressure is not to be applied (to people) based on it, nor is there to be any boycotting over it.

It has been narrated that Abul-Hasan ibn Bash-shaar said, 'Those who say that they (the disbelievers) will be made to account (for their deeds) are not to be prayed behind.' The correct position that the vast majority (of the scholars) hold is that both groups are to be prayed behind. In fact, the differing between them can even be settled with a proper study of the issue, even when some of the companions of

Imaam Ahmad differed over it. The majority of them said that they will not be held accountable (for their deeds), and a number of other scholars and people of rhetoric differed over this issue (as well).

This is since the word 'accounting' or 'reckoning' (hisaab) could mean (Allaah's) Knowledge of their deeds, the writing of the deeds in the books, the display of the books to the disbelievers, rebuking them for what they have done, or the increasing or decreasing of their punishments based on their level of disbelief. This kind of reckoning (hisaab) is confirmed (for them) by way of scholarly agreement.

However, the word 'reckoning' (hisaab) could be used to mean the weighing of the good deeds and bad deeds (on the Scale) to see which is heavier. The disbeliever has no good deeds (hasanaat) that could be weighed along with his bad deeds, since all of his deeds are rendered useless. They would only be weighed to show how empty his Scale (of good deeds) is, not so that his good deeds might outweigh (the bad ones).

It could also be meant by 'reckoning' (hisaab) – Is Allaah the one who will speak to them or not? The Qur'aan and the Sunnah show that Allaah will speak to them in a way that will degrade, rebuke, and reprimand them, not in a way that draws them near or honors them, and not in a merciful way. There were also some scholars who rejected this totally.

The three positions (that the scholars held) about the disbelievers seeing (Allaah) are:

1 - The disbelievers will never see their Lord, not those who outwardly manifest their disbelief, nor those who conceal it (the hypocrites). This is the position of the majority of the later scholars, and it is what is understood from the generality of the speech of the early scholars. It is also the position of the companions of Imaam Ahmad and others.

2 - Whoever outwardly manifests tawheed will see Him, both the believers of this Ummah and the hypocrites, along with those left over from the People of the Book. That will be on the plains of the Day of Judgement. Then the hypocrites will be screened off and will not be able to see Him after that. This is the position of Aboo Bakr Ibn Khuzaymah from the imaams of Ahlus-Sunnah. Also, al-Qaadee Aboo Ya'laa

has mentioned likewise with the hadeeth of His coming to them, may He be glorified and exalted, at the mawqif (the expansive land where the people are gathered on the Day of Judgement), and the hadeeth is well known.

3 - The disbelievers will see Him in a way that denotes identification and punishment, like the robber who sees the authorities. Then they will be screened off and thus their punishment will magnify and their penalty will become more severe. This is the position of Abul-Hasan ibn Saalim and his companions and others, and they ascribe to the foundations of Imaam Ahmad ibn Hambal and Aboo Sahl ibn 'Abdillaah at-Tustaree.

So, to summarize, it was not my intention to make this letter a comprehensive discussion of this issue, since knowledge is too vast. Rather the intention was to clarify that this issue is not from the important issues that deserve lengthy discussions, or that we put it forth to all the people so that it becomes a pivotal issue that causes the hearts to differ and the desires to scatter.

This issue, as far as I know, is not something that requires boycotting and the breaking of ties, since most of the people who spoke about this issue in the past were people of Sunnah and Ittibaa' (people who followed the way of the Salaf). People who did not boycott each other or break off ties differed over this issue, just as the Companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) and those after them differed over whether the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) saw His Lord in this life or not. They spoke with very harsh words, like what the Mother of the Believers, 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, said: 'Whoever claims that Muhammad saw his Lord,

then he has invented a great lie against Allaah.' Even with this (kind of statement), it did not take the differing into boycotting or the breaking of ties.

Similarly, Imaam Ahmad debated some people from Ahlus-Sunnah about the issue of affirming that the ten (Companions who were promised Paradise) are absolutely in Paradise, until the debate lead to raised voices. Ahmad and others believed in affirming (their place in Paradise absolutely), but they did not boycott those who held to not affirming it for them absolutely.
There are a number of other examples similar to this.

Those who have differed in this issue (the disbelievers seeing Allaah) have even more right to be excused. As for the majority of the scholars (who reject the idea of the disbelievers seeing Allaah), then their excuse (that their opponents could offer for them) is obvious, something shown in the Qur'aan and narrated by the Salaf, that the vast majority of what has been narrated about seeing Allaah is only related to the believers seeing (Him). Also, no explicit text reached them proving that the disbelievers will see Allaah. Furthermore, they understood that the generality of seeing Allaah is the highest kind of honor and the best possible delight.

As for those who have affirmed (that the disbelievers will see Allaah) in general, as well as those who have a affirmed it upon a specific understanding, then I have already mentioned their excuse. They say that (the screening referred to in) Allaah's Statement, ((Nay! Verily they, on that Day, will be screened from their Lord)), is the screening after the reckoning, since it could be said, 'I have screened Fulaan from seeing me,' and it is possible that he had already seen (him) in some way before that. Thus it is a kind of screening that is connected (to having already seen Him). And by way of this screening, there exists a difference between them and the believers, for verily He, may He be glorified and exalted, will have appeared to the believers on the plains of the Day of Judgement after the disbelievers have been screened from seeing Him, as indicated in the previously mentioned narrations. Then, He will appear to them once they are in Paradise, in general and specific ways, always and forever, eternally.

They say that the speech of the Salaf is in accordance with what is in the Qur'aan. Also, this kind of seeing (Allaah) that is for all the Creation in general could be a very limited kind of view that would not even be considered 'seeing' like the specific way the believers will see Him, since there are many different modes of seeing (something), and they differ greatly from one kind to the next, and it is likely that we may not be able to distinguish between them.

(Now I must mention that) there are some manners that must be observed:

- 1 - Whoever refrains from speaking about this issue and does not call to anything, then it is not permissible to boycott him, even if he (inwardly) believes in the correctness of one of the positions. This is because there are much greater innovations that we do not boycott over, unless the person is a caller (to the innovation) and does not remain quiet.

This is one (point).

- 2 - Verily it is not befitting that the people of knowledge make this issue into a test and sign of correctness, preferring their brothers (who agree with them) over their opponents, for verily this is something hated by Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam).

- 3 - It is not something that should not be used to start conversations with the common people, those who are already safe and free of problems. However, if someone is asked about it, or he sees someone that deserves to learn about it, then let him recite upon him what he knows about it, that which he hopes will bring about benefit. This is not the case for the issue of the believers seeing their Lord in the Hereafter, as belief in that is obligatory and binding due to what has

been convincingly reported from the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), his Companions, and the Salaf of this Ummah.

- 4 - It is not for anyone to speak generally and say that the disbelievers will see their Lord without any restrictions. This is wrong for two reasons:

Firstly, seeing Allaah in general is something understood to be an honor and a reward, so it is misleading to mention it in an unrestricted fashion. It is not for anyone to use words unrestrictedly when that may lead people to make conclusions that oppose the truth, unless that exact kind of usage was found with the Salaf. In this case specifically, this kind of usage was not found with them.

Secondly, If something from a general ruling is singled out and mentioned specifically in a negative way, then this specification is not to be allowed. For indeed Allaah has created everything and wanted everything to happen the way it has, however a man must not specify things that are repugnant from the created beings or events that are not desired by the Islaamic legislation, by singling them out and saying:

'O Creator of the dogs!' or 'O One who wants fornication!' and the likes, as opposed to saying, 'O Creator of everything!' or 'I call on the One who permits everything to happen!' Similarly, in this situation, if someone said, 'There is no one that exists except that Allaah will be alone with him (on the Day of Judgement), and there will be no screen (between him and Allaah) and no translator. Also, if someone said, 'Verily all of the people will be gathered and brought to Allaah and He will look at them and they will look at Him,' then this phrase eliminates any confusion that might arise from the first statement (that 'the disbelievers will see Allaah' mentioned in an unrestricted manner).

- 5 - Let no one go beyond the usage of the phrases used (by the Salaf), even if there could be some differing over some of the meanings. This is something that must be observed, as the affair is as our Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) informed us, and goodness, all goodness, is in following the righteous Salaf, learning more about the narrations of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) and nderstanding them, holding tight to the Rope of Allaah, keeping ourselves close to all means of harmony and staying together, and staying away from all things that lead to differing and dividing, unless it is a clear affair in which Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) have ordered us to stay away from people because of it, then there is no hesitation (in abandoning them).

- 6 - When it is not clear if a statement or action is something for which a person is to be punished or not, then it is obligatory to not punish him, due to the statement of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam): 'Leave off the hudood (Islaamically legislated punishments) if there are doubts, for verily for you to excuse someone mistakenly is better than mistakenly punishing (someone).' It was collected by Aboo Daawood. This is so especially since the affair will lead to a long-lasting evil and to the splitting of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah. For verily the corruption that results from such a splitting is many times greater than the evil that comes from the error of a small group of people in a subsidiary matter.

- 7 - When an affair is not clear to someone, then let him supplicate with what Muslim has reported in his Saheeh, on the authority of 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her), who said that when the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) stood to pray, he would say: 'O Allaah, Lord of Jibraa'eel, Meekaa'eel, and Israafeel, Creator of the heavens and the earth, the One who knows the hidden and manifest affairs, You judge between Your Servants about what they used to differ over, guide me to the truth in the affairs that are differed over! By Your Permission, for verily You guide whomever You like to a straight path.'

Having said this, I ask Allaah, the Great One, the Lord of the great Throne, to grant us, and all of you, success in achieving that which He loves and is pleased with, both statements and actions. And may He grant us the ability to follow the guidance of His Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) in secret and in the open. And may He gather us all together upon guidance, couple our affairs with success, and cause our hearts to be united upon the heart of the best of us. And may He protect us from Shaytaan and grant us refuge from the evils of our own selves and from the evil (consequences) of our deeds.

And I have written this letter, doing my best to provide some direction, and I only seek to correct the affairs as much as I am able, and my success is only from Allaah. Having said this, I do not have complete knowledge of the reality of what is between you or the specific details of your affairs. I have only written based on what I understood from the report of the one who narrated (your affairs) to me. And the greater goal was to correct that which is between you and bring the hearts together.

As for a comprehensive statement about this issue and others, and a clarification of the reality of the affair, then perhaps I may speak or write about that at another time when I feel that there is more need for it. As for this occasion, I felt that the need to straighten out your affair is more important.

Was-Salaamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatuh, and all praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of all that exists, and may He raise the rank of our leader Muhammad, and that of his family and Companions, and may He grant them an abundance of peace. Allaah is sufficient for us, what a fine Wakeel (Caretaker).

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